

Oriental pied hornbill on decline

Loss of forest habitats, food shortage threaten the large-beaked bird in Bangladesh

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Noted for its exceptionally beautiful large beak, oriental pied hornbill sees a gradual decrease in our country mainly due to gradual loss of dense forests.

"Only ten years ago, one would often come across this bird and hear its call in Lawacherra forest. But they are rarely seen now," said Swapan Deb Sajal, director of Sreemanagl-based Bangladesh Bonyo Prani Seba Foundation, an organisation working for wildlife care.

"The birds have distinct yellow beaks. Their body is deep black. But the abdomen and tail is white," he said.

"Oriental pied hornbill is hunted for the huge beak and big feathers. Besides, some unscrupulous kabiraj (herbal practitioner) in the rural areas use it for treatment of diseases," he said.

"Locally called 'kao dhanesh', the bird measures 55 to 60 centimetres in length, and its scientific name is anthracoceros albirostris. Eminent bird researcher Salim Ali mentioned the bird in his book," said Dr Monirul H Khan, professor of zoology at Jahangirnagar University.

"The bird is still found in thick forests of

greater Sylhet and Chittagong. Their main abode is in India, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and southern China," he said.

"This bird is facing danger as the big trees of our hill forests are gradually decreasing, causing problem for biodiversity," he said.

Environment activist Joly Paul, president of Lawacherra Bon O Jibo Boichitro Rakkha Andolon, said some of the wild birds are becoming extinct due to gradual loss of trees, especially the large ones, in Lawacherra forest.

"The oriental pied hornbill's food comprises wild fruits such as figs, palm fruit, papaya and fruits of flower plants. It also takes large insects, small birds, small reptiles and amphibians. Its food differs slightly between the breeding and non-breeding seasons," said Tabibur Rahman, assistant conservator of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department in Moulvibazar.

The bird faces food crisis, habitat and reproduction problems following gradual loss of evergreen forests in our country, he said.

International Union for Conservation of Nature has put the bird species in 'least concern' category.



A pair of oriental pied hornbill at Bangladesh Bonyo Prani Seba Foundation in Sreemangal of Moulvibazar. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

DC leads Uttara Gonobhaban cleaning

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Scouts led by the deputy commissioner cleaned Uttara Gonobhaban in the town yesterday.

DC Shaheena Khatun along with 100 scout leaders did the cleaning.

She said the scouts will build the nation. This is a regular activity of scouts.

"We will clean all the institutions of the district with help of scout and they will lead the nation in future," said the DC.

Rover Scout member Masudur Rahman said no DC joined with them to clean the place before.

Woman held for burning kid with hot iron

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A court here yesterday sent a woman to jail after rejecting her bail prayer in connection with a case for burning a seven-year-old kid with hot iron in Bogra town on Thursday.

The accused, Rokeya Jasmin, 35, is wife of Shefaur Rahman of Thanthania area in the town.

Injured Jihad Hasan, a pre-primary student at YMC Public School and College, is now undergoing treatment at Mohammad Ali Hospital.

Jihad's mother Jyoti Bewa, who has been working as a domestic help at Rokeya's house for last four years, said Jasmin scolded Jihad as he was running around the house on Thursday morning.

At one stage, Jasmin took a hot spoon from her kitchen and burned Jihad's cheeks with the hot iron, she said.

Four days after the incident, when Jihad went to school on Monday, his teachers saw the burn spots on his cheeks and informed the police.

Police detained Jasmin after Jihad's mother filed a case with Sadar Police Station the same night, ASP Sonaton Chakraborty (Sadar Circle) said.

FARID MURDER IN TANGAIL

Five AL leaders among 18 indicted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Detective Branch (DB) of Police yesterday submitted the charge sheet in a court here against 18 people, including five Awami League (AL) leaders, for killing Bhuapur upazila AL leader Rokibul Islam Farid in 2016.

Tangail DB Police Officer-in-Charge, also Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, Ashok Kumar Sinha submitted the charge sheet to the Judicial Magistrate's Court.

The charge sheeted accused are district AL member and Zila Parishad member Abdul Hamid Bhola, Bhuapur upazila AL Joint Convener Taherul Islam Tota, Aloa Union Parishad Chairman and union AL General Secretary Nurul Islam, former upazila Joint Secretary Syed Masudul Haque, UP member Mokbul Hossain Tarafdar and Nurul Islam's close aides Shawkat Hossain, Nasir Uddin, Rana, Mehedi Hasan, Lal Mahmud, Mainul

Hossain, Sanwar Hossain Babu, Khokon Miah, Khalilur Rahman, Mamun Sarkar, Abdul Latif, Konik Hasan and Alamgir Hossain.

A separate charge sheet was pressed against under-aged Mainul Hossain, 16, for holding his trial in a juvenile court, the IO said.

The charge sheet mentioned that dispute between the party leaders who got posts and those who were deprived of posts in the new committee of the upazila unit, dispute over work contracts and also Farid's opposing Nurul Islam in the UP elections in 2016, were reasons behind the murder, he added.

Farid, former Bhuapur upazila unit AL organising secretary, went missing on the way to his house at Bharoi village on December 5, 2016. Police recovered his throat-slit body from a pond near his house on December 6.

Initially, Bhuapur police investigated the case but later the investigation was handed over to the district DB police.

Akkelpur OC faces judicial probe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Joypurhat court yesterday ordered a judicial probe against the officer-in-charge (OC) of Akkelpur Police Station.

The court gave the order after Shewly Begum, wife of Atiqur Rahman of Akkelpur municipality area, filed a case, accusing OC Sirajul Islam under the Women and Children Repression and Prevention Act.

In the case, Shewly stated that police picked her father Md Aybar Hossain and took him to the police station on Monday. After the incident, she along with her family members went to the PS and wanted to know the reason behind picking up her father.

But, the OC forced her relatives out and assaulted her physically.

Aybar Hossain is on bail in a case, said police.

Contacted, the OC said the allegation brought against him is false. However, he did not give any suitable answer to why police detained the father of the woman.

The woman recently filed a case against her husband over domestic violence, said police.



Mango growers in Rangpur and Dinajpur expect bumper yield of the fruit this season as favourable weather conditions have helped about 90 percent flowering of the trees. The picture was taken from Basherhat area in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

DINAJPUR, RANGPUR

Mango growers eye good yield as trees in full bloom

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

With budding in the full swing, mango orchards in Rangpur and Dinajpur districts are spreading sweet smell during the Bangla month of Falgun while the fruit growers pass a busy time nursing the trees.

Around 90 percent of the mango trees have already flowered and the growers are expecting a bumper yield if the weather goes well in the coming days.

Haribhanga mango of Rangpur and Dinajpur is very popular for its unique taste.

Other popular varieties like Khirshapati, Mohna, Rajbhog, Rupali, Amrapali, Langra, Gopalbhog, Surjapuri, Asiyana, Chhatapara, Fazli, Chini Falzi, Surmai and Misribhog are also produced widely in the two districts.

Harvesting of this fragrant juicy fruit will start in mid-April (Boishakh, first month of Bangla calendar) and continue till early October, said the growers.

Varieties of the fruit are available for around six months, said mango grower Akbar Ali of Biral upazila.

There are about 7,100 large and small mango orchards in Dinajpur and Rangpur districts.

The cultivation and trade of the popular fruit is a blessing for rural economy as it creates job employment and business opportunities for a large number of people every season.

According to the Department of Horticulture, over one lakh tonnes of mango was produced in Dinajpur and Rangpur districts last year and there was mango was trade worth Tk 450 crore.

Although the fruit is produced everywhere in the two districts, the mangoes of Nawabganj upazila of Dinajpur and those, especially of Haribhanga variety, of Badarganj and Mithapukur of Rangpur, are noted for their taste and aroma, said growers and traders.

Growers said they are watering properly and spraying medicines to prevent damage of the flowers.

Proliferation will be affected if there is rain

during this flowering time, they said.

Ramzan Ali, a mango grower of Badarganj upazila in Rangpur, said all the trees of his seven-acre mango orchard are in full bloom.

"We are expecting good yield this year if the weather remains favorable," he said.

"I earned good profit last year from my mango orchard. I am expecting more yield this season if I can save the flowers through proper nursing. And of course, we need a favourable weather," said Shahinul Islam Bokul of Mithapukur upazila of Rangpur.

There are 1,200 Haribhanga mango trees in his orchard.

Soil and weather in the area are favourable for mango, said Imrul Ahsan, a horticulturist of Dinajpur.

Sazedul Islam, an officer of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Rangpur, said the area of mango orchards sees increase in the district every year as the cultivation earns good profit.

Coir rope industry faces tough future

MOHSIN MILON with ANDREW EAGLE

Centuries ago, when Indian navigators sailed to Malaya, Java, China and Arabia, they did so using coir ropes. Coir is the fibre of coconut shells; and in Jessore's Monirampur upazila the production of coir ropes is a traditional industry that has survived into modern times. Sadly, it's become an industry with an uncertain future.

"Making rope used to be very inexpensive," says one rope-maker, Yusuf Ali from Rajgong village in Chaluahati union. "We were able to collect fallen coconuts from the roadsides for free, so really there wasn't any cost at all. In years gone by there was good demand for Jessore ropes."

Traditionally, among the thousands of rope-makers in the area were a good number of housewives. Being able to work from home and earn up to Tk 300 per day, they found rope manufacture appealing. But times have changed.

"These days, a hundred coconut shells costs around Tk 300 in the market," says another rope-maker, Abdul Wadud. "That means to make four

kilograms of rope we have to spend nearly Tk 800 upfront."

The industry's challenges aren't limited to the higher cost of raw material. The availability of heavy nylon and other synthetic ropes has brought new competition to coir ropes, with the traditional industry now at risk of being lost altogether.

In traditional rope-making villages like Khatoyadanga and Amrajhuta, many villagers have already given up the customary trade in favour of more reliable work as day labourers and rickshaw drivers.

Yet some persist. There is an emotional attachment: rope-making is often thought to be a kind of a living link with their ancestry; and spirits are buoyed by the knowledge that coir ropes still hold advantages over synthetic alternatives for some uses.

"Coir ropes are very strong," explains Fazr Ali, a rope trader from Rajganj Bazar. "They are most often used to keep nipa palm roofs in place. They are suitable for traditional homes and garden pavilions, as well as for securing paddy stacks."



A good number of village women in Jessore's Monirampur upazila are engaged in making traditional coir ropes using fibre of coconut shells.

PHOTO: STAR